

A decorative graphic featuring several brown coffee beans with white highlights, arranged in a circular pattern around the title.

What's the future of Tracks?

Tracks readers may have noticed that they didn't receive all four issues of the magazine this year. The Spring 2003 fishing issue was a no-show, and the current issue is a combined Fall/Winter 2003 publication—in other words, only two Tracks issues were published this year.

This may lead you to wonder if the state's budget woes will put an end to the California Department of Fish and Game's free hunting and fishing magazine. Truth be told, that almost happened. DFG employees who would otherwise be compiling data and crafting stories for the magazine were knee-deep in budget reduction drills in early 2003, during the time when the spring issue should have been published.

Every DFG activity is facing intense scrutiny in the face of the state's massive budget cuts. We have had to ask ourselves, "How high does Tracks rank on the list of DFG priorities?" To help answer that question, we conducted a survey of 2,000 Tracks readers. (For partial survey results, see page 14) More than 50 percent responded, which is a mind-boggling reply rate. (A five percent response rate is considered acceptable).

Tracks readers overwhelmingly expressed their interest in continuing to receive the magazine, for free. Many readers said they already pay enough for their licenses, tags, etc., and should at least get a free magazine.

We agree, and we have no plans to start charging our readers for Tracks. We are considering accepting advertising, however, since readers didn't express a strong objection. Advertising revenue will help ensure the future of Tracks—on a regular publication schedule of four issues a year.

To all of our readers, we want to say thanks for your continued support. Please let us know how we can improve the magazine by giving us your ideas about the kinds of topics you'd like to see addressed.

Sincerely,

Lorna Bernard
Tracks Editor

Tom Blankinship, Craig Stowers, Doug Updike, Dan Yparraquirre
Hunting Program Coordinators